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AUTHOR Upham, Steadman
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ABSTRACT

Suggestions for overcoming declining enrollments in the field of anthropology are proposed that have relevance for other humanities disciplines. Declining enrollments in anthropology are linked to its perceived academic relevance; students are concerned about employment after graduation. The problem of declining anthropology enrollments and majors and shrinking programs and faculty can be addressed by refocusing the curricula to emphasize the role of anthropology in the marketplace and the types of jobs available to anthropologists. It is important to structure anthropology curricula at the undergraduate level to reflect the training and expertise necessary to tap this job market. Integrating disciplinary research into the curricula is an important part of this process. Students should be informed that job opportunities for bachelor's level anthropologists are in three separate areas: historic preservation (also called contract archeology and cultural resources management); biomedical anthropology; and international development. This new curricular model would be based on the application of the fundamental theories, methods, and techniques of anthropology to this expanding market. (SW)

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RESEARCH AND RELEVANCE IN THE UNIVERSITY:
THE CASE FOR ANTHROPOLOGY

by

Steadman Upham

New Mexico State University

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INTRODUCTION

Because college students are uniquely positioned upon graduation to assume the rights, duties and obligations of leadership within our society, national and international events often have profound effects on them and, by definition, on the curricula that are designed to help them meet their own and society's needs. Such was the case during the 1960s when the effects of student activism resulted in major modifications to standard university curricula in the United States. Changes in course offerings and course content were made in virtually every college and university in the country. Such changes were prompted by a new-found ethnic awareness, a need to create popularized, if conflated versions of technical science courses (e.g. Ecology 100) and academic recognition of self-designed curricula and self-paced courses. New universities were even founded on these principles. In the 1960s and early 1970s these curricula changes were seen as academic *solutions* to the relevance problems raised by a national and international crisis of confidence. That crisis was caused by civil unrest and a counter-culture ethos at home, the Vietnam war and deteriorating perceptions of the U.S. military-industrial complex abroad. Today most educators have a much different view of the academic solutions devised during the late 1960s, but for college students the problems of academic relevance remain.

Twenty years ago student activism on college campuses across the nation was manifest not only in a heightened awareness of important social issues like civil rights and the morality of war, but also in an increased curiosity about other peoples, other countries, and especially other cultures and belief systems. The chief beneficiaries of this social activism on many college campuses were disciplines in the humanities that offered comparative, cross-cultural curricula. Anthropology departments were among such disciplines, and students saw anthropology courses as offering a comfortable round trip ticket to global cultural and ethnic diversity for the price of three credit hours. Driven by these social tides, enrollments in

undergraduate and graduate anthropology programs peaked in the early 1970s.

Today, social activism is still very much in evidence on college campuses. In contrast to the 1960s, however, the social activism among contemporary students is stimulated by national socioeconomic issues. A precarious relationship between habitual deficit spending at the federal level, record trade deficits, and a ballooning national debt have heightened interest both in careers and in assessing the long term financial consequences of choosing a field of study. This situation, coupled with a general swing toward political conservatism in the country, has affected the curricula of colleges and universities. Those disciplines offering practical and tangible benefits in the form of guaranteed employment upon graduation (engineering, computer science, and business) have benefited most from this recent activism. Enrollments have increased dramatically and curricula have been expanded in these fields, often at the expense of enrollments and programs in the humanities.

As an anthropologist I am concerned not only about declining enrollments in my own field, but also about the cost/benefit decisions made by students and administrators that often appear to sacrifice the long term advantages of a broad liberal education. It is clear, however, that students and administrators are responding to the same social stimuli and, particularly for state-funded colleges and universities, that stimulus is translated in state legislatures to funding for disciplines and programs with large enrollments. Because colleges and universities operate in the marketplace they are driven by the same market forces of supply and demand that result in the price of everything from textbooks to a college education.

In this paper I consider how the problem of declining enrollments can be overcome. Although my discussion pertains strictly to anthropology, the relevance of my proposals for the rest of the humanities should not be overlooked. From a structural perspective, I maintain that the problem of declining enrollments is one of perceived academic relevance in light of the way today's students define social

activism. From the student's perspective any solutions that are constructed must deal effectively with the student's immediate socioeconomic problem: employment after graduation. Educators also have an obligation, however, to provide for the student's long term intellectual needs: to supply a foundation for continued intellectual, social, and psychological development. From the standpoint of faculty and administrators in universities, the only acceptable long-term solution to the enrollment and, hence, the relevance problem, is one that solves the problem on three separate but interrelated fronts: 1) increase total enrollments, 2) increase undergraduate and graduate majors, and 3) expand curricula and faculty. I maintain that the solution to the problem is not provided by offering service courses to other departments, although this is something that occurs routinely on most campuses. Rather, the solution lies in addressing the problem of academic relevance directly.

THE ENROLLMENT PROBLEM IN ANTHROPOLOGY

Interest among students in the four traditional subfields of academic anthropology (archaeology, cultural anthropology, physical anthropology and anthropological linguistics) has decreased, and anthropology departments have experienced serious declines in enrollment during the last decade. Detailed statistical analyses of enrollment trends in anthropology for the academic years 1977-78 through 1984-85 have been compiled by Whitney (1985) and Ward (1985). Although more complete longitudinal data are desirable, the unmistakable message of these data is that anthropology is in trouble. During this seven year period, enrollments declined dramatically in all but PhD-granting departments. As Whitney states,

BA departments showed the greatest drop, 18.1%, and MA departments declined 15.8% from the 1977-78 levels. Between 1982-83 and 1984-85, enrollments in advanced undergraduate courses fell, continuing a trend seen in previous surveys, Introductory course enrollments

increased in PhD and MA departments, but declined in BA departments.....The ratio of introductory to advanced enrollment continued to climb---in all but BA departments---reaching a high of 2.5 introductory courses for each advanced course in 1984-85. During the same period this ratio was increasing in PhD departments, both the enrollment figures and the number of majors and degrees were *decreasing*, very likely a reflection of the increased emphasis on offering service courses to other departments. BA departments, meanwhile, experienced the greatest enrollment drop during the same period they reported offering 25% fewer introductory courses for each advanced course (1985:1).

Overall, total undergraduate enrollments have dropped nearly 15%, and total undergraduate majors 28% during this seven year period (Ward 1985:20). At the same time, the number of BA, MA and PhD degrees granted in anthropology dropped by almost 44%. These drastic declines have been reflected in the employment of anthropologists, at least in universities. From 1979-80 to the present, for example, there has been an 11% drop in the number of assistant professors, but the number of associate professors has remained constant. In addition, the number of anthropologists teaching at the instructor level declined from nearly 10% in 1979-80 to fewer than 2% in 1984-85.

When academic disciplines like anthropology exhibit declining enrollments over a period of several years, the enrollment figures are normally a sign of general stagnation in the field, with all major indicators and especially employment showing downward trends. Fortunately, this situation does not hold true for all of anthropology. At the same time that interest among students in anthropology as a profession has been declining, advanced course offerings dwindling, and degrees granted decreasing, the overall employment picture for anthropologists has actually

improved. Tangible employment gains large enough to offset the losses in the academic sector have been made in the applied fields of international development, social impact assessment, historic preservation, forensic and applied biomedical anthropology, and museology. Employment opportunities for anthropologists in all of these fields have expanded during the last decade, yet in most universities, anthropology curricula, especially at the undergraduate level, continue in the same traditional mold as during the period of anthropology's peak popularity. What this means is that students who are not exposed to these applied fields in anthropology often have no knowledge that an expanding job market exists; that employment opportunities offering the expectations of a reasonable income, travel, and employment stability in the future are available. Such students include lower division undergraduates who might continue in anthropology were it not for mistaken perceptions regarding future employment. In other words, even though anthropology may be perceived as an interesting field of study by students, it is considered irrelevant by the standards of today's student activism.

SOLVING THE RELEVANCE PROBLEM: RESEARCH IN THE CLASSROOM

Among many people, academics included, the term "research" in the humanities often conjures up some narrowly specialized endeavor, conducted in private by a group of scruffy, unwashed professionals. In such conceptions, research rarely has any practical applicability and most often serves some esoteric function that can only be appreciated by understanding a seventh order polynomial or self-generating algorithm. I construct this somewhat extreme scenario not only for effect, but also so I can repeat what William May said one year ago in this conference about teaching and research. He said,

Broadly conceived, teaching includes not only the instruction of students but the teaching of colleagues. Writing for publication

is part of the transmission of knowledge. Faculty members engage in teaching when they write articles, monographs, book reviews and books. It is teaching without a classroom, teaching to a wider audience of peers, who may or may not yet be engaged in a similar *research enterprise* (1985:8-9 *emphasis added*).

If one accepts May's reasoning, and I do, linking the normally separate domains of teaching and research into a single coherent entity means that only one domain actually exists. Depending on one's preference, there is only *teaching* or there is only *research*. It matters less how one handles this linkage semantically, however, than how one actualizes it as a professional.

Earlier in this paper I noted that any solution to the relevance problem in anthropology must meet students' needs regarding employment. I contend that such a solution will also solve the problem of declining enrollments, decreased numbers of majors, and shrinking programs and faculty. From a descriptive standpoint, the solution to this seemingly complex problem is a simple one: make the role of anthropology in the marketplace and the employment of anthropologists major concerns in anthropology curricula. In the remainder of this paper I discuss how this kind of solution might be achieved. I maintain that the use of disciplinary research is a key element in developing such course curricula.

Resolving the Employment Dilemma: The Key to Increased Enrollments

Making anthropology relevant to today's students means that anthropology must be placed on the same footing with disciplines offering what is perceived by students as more standard or traditional forms of employment. Most students' perceptions of "doing anthropology" place anthropologists in some distant and remote land, studying the esoteric rituals of a vanishing people. While such work does take place in anthropology, it is increasingly rare today. Much more common are the kinds of jobs

that exist in the United States and place anthropologists alongside business people, medical doctors/researchers, health care specialists, elected officials, and federal, state and local bureaucrats of all kinds. Consequently, a professor's first obligation to students is to inform them of the myriad opportunities for employment in anthropology. A beginning point is to consult the literature on employment opportunities published by the American Anthropological Association (Belden n.d. a, n.d. b) or the Anthropological Society of Washington (e.g. Landman et al. 1981). More important, however, is to structure anthropology curricula *at the undergraduate level* to reflect the training and expertise necessary to tap this job market. Integrating disciplinary research into the curricula is the single most important part of this process.

Most of the employment opportunities available for students graduating with a BA or BS degree in anthropology today are in three separate areas of anthropological training: historic preservation, also known as contract archaeology or cultural resources management, biomedical anthropology, and international development. Naturally employment opportunities expand, and remuneration increases in these fields with advanced training. Nevertheless, jobs do exist for the well trained undergraduate in anthropology. Employment in the field of historic preservation provides a case in point.

Slightly more than a decade ago, employment for archaeologists outside universities was uncommon. Most jobs required an advanced degree; jobs for the well trained BA anthropologist were virtually nonexistent. The passage of federal legislation mandating consideration of the effects of federal undertakings on historic and prehistoric archaeological properties drastically changed this situation. Today, the federal government oversees the expenditure of more than \$200,000,000.00 annually for archaeology. Contract archaeology has accounted for the single largest employment gain in all of anthropology since 1974. The result of this tremendous growth has been beneficial for trained anthropologists with and

without advanced degrees. BA anthropologists with a specialization in archaeology probably have filled the majority of jobs that have been created, since the need for field archaeologists has been greatest; supervisory positions are nearly always staffed by MA or PhD archaeologists.

The tremendous growth of cultural resources management has been accompanied by a concomitant growth in archaeological research associated with such projects. Bringing the results of this research into the classroom can be accomplished in two different but compatible ways. First, the results of current cultural resource management projects can be used to present information in lecture and discussion on such fundamental topics in archaeology as research design preparation, probabilistic sampling and data acquisition strategies, site significance, methods and techniques of analysis. If one does not participate in a cultural resources management program directly or have ready access to the research results of such projects, information on current cultural resources management studies is available through a variety of professional journals. Consequently, any professional can use the results of current research to teach the fundamentals of archaeology.

Second, using the research results from current cultural resources management projects permits discussion of the management aspects of doing archaeology in the marketplace. While archaeology still requires a great number of specialized scientific skills, the growth of cultural resources management as a field also means that archaeologists must possess business acumen, an understanding of federal laws and regulations, comprehension of the federal procurement system and, most importantly, what professional standards and ethics mean in a contracting situation. In this case, the use of current CRM research as a basis for classroom study facilitates examination of the legislative mandates governing different kinds of projects, the tactics of federal contracting, the client-professional relationship, project staffing and budgeting. When such curricula changes are instituted, it is

rarely the case that an archaeologist graduates without knowing the history of cultural resources law, the difference between an RFP, RFQ and IFB, what constitutes conflict of interest, how much it costs to excavate a site, what level of effort is required, and what time frame is reasonable to complete a project. At the same time, the student is aware of on-going research and how state-of-the-art methods and techniques of investigation can be used to resolve specific archaeological problems.

Although the example described above is unique to archaeology, cultural resources management projects commonly include cultural and physical anthropologists, public historians, specialists in historic architecture and art, and scientists and scholars from many other fields (e.g. biology, hydrology, palynology, physics, geography, geomorphology, geology, and even astronomy). Consequently, the potential exists through the field of cultural resources management to incorporate the disciplinary research from at least a dozen fields into the humanities curricula. It should also be noted, however, that other fields of applied anthropology have an equal or greater potential. The field of international development, for example, relies on the expertise not only of cultural anthropologists, but also rural sociologists, political and economic geographers, agricultural economists, range and wildlife experts, and a host of more specific humanistic and scientific fields. In other words, the model of incorporating current disciplinary research into a revised curricula is broadly applicable to most fields in the humanities.

CONCLUSION

Adopting the strategy described above has many implications for the present style of academic instruction. The most important of these implications pertains to course preparation. It is no longer appropriate, for example, to use textbooks for courses that are based on the methods and results of current disciplinary research. Textbooks, at least in anthropology, do not reflect the dynamic changes that take place in the field over the course of a single year. Because the focus of applied

research and, hence, the employment situation in anthropology, can change rapidly, courses using the disciplinary research model must remain current. Textbooks can be used for supplementary reading, but are no longer primary in course work. This situation does not mean, however, that instruction in the fundamental theories, methods and techniques of anthropology is sacrificed by attention to current disciplinary research. On the contrary, instruction in these areas follows the new model based on the *application* of such theories, methods and techniques. The result will be the graduation of students who possess the same level of expertise in the fundamentals of the field, but also understand how anthropology functions in the marketplace, what employment opportunities exist, and how their skills qualify them for these jobs. By emphasizing these factors, anthropology and other disciplines in the humanities can become relevant to today's students.

A changed perception of relevance can be translated into increased enrollments, increased undergraduate and graduate majors and, eventually, expanded programs and faculties. Even so, disciplines like anthropology will never achieve the "relevance" now seen in the fields of engineering, business, and computer science. This degree of relevance, however, is not the long-term goal for anthropology. The long-term goal must be to train students in both the fundamental and practical aspects of the field and to allow them upon graduation the opportunity to compete with engineers, business people and computer scientists in the marketplace.

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